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Subjects Committee Papers

CIRCULATED IN PREPARATION FOR THE

World Conference on Faith and Order

Published by the world-wide Continuation Committee representing the following Communions: Anglican, Armenian, Baptist, Congregational, Czechoslovak, Disciples, Eastern Orthodox, Friends, German Evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist, Old Catholic, Presbyterian, Reformed, South India United.

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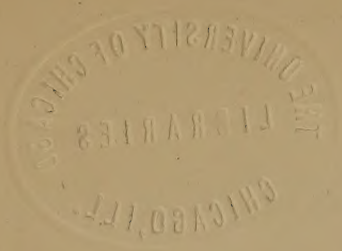

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Copies of this pamphlet and translations thereof into French, German and modern Greek, and other pamphlets listed on pages 28 and 29, may be had free on application to the General Secretary, Robert H. Gardiner, 174 Water Street, Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A.

It must be remembered that this Report and the documents herewith presented are not intended to express views held on particular matters by the Subjects Committee or its members, but are their deductions from the reports sent in to them and from the other material upon which this Report is based, and are, like all the preparations for the World Conference on Faith and Order, tentative and preliminary, and subject to revision as fuller understanding and agreement come.

It is hoped, therefore, that full and frank criticism will be sent to the General Secretary, especially if it is constructive, that is, not merely pointing out defects or mistakes, but suggesting improvements.

THE Subjects Committee was appointed to suggest topics for thorough consideration by small groups of members of different Churches throughout the world in the hope that careful reports of such discussions will be sent to the General Secretary, Robert H. Gardiner, 174 Water Street, Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A., for the Subjects Committee, to enable it to make suggestive reports thereon for further discussion, so that a tentative programme for the World Conference itself may be prepared.

The first series of questions on the answers to which this report is based were:

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE FAITH OF THE REUNITED CHURCH.

1. **What degree of unity in Faith will be necessary in a reunited Church?**
2. **Is a statement of this one Faith in the form of a Creed necessary or desirable?**
3. **If so, what Creed should be used? or what other formulary would be desirable?**
4. **What are the proper uses of a Creed and of a Confession of Faith?**

The second series on which a few reports have been received already is:

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE MINISTRY IN THE REUNITED CHURCH.

1. **What degree of unity in the matter of order will be necessary in a reunited Church?**
2. **Is it necessary that there should be a common Ministry universally recognized?**
3. **If so, of what orders or kinds of Ministers will this Ministry consist?**
4. **Will the reunited Church require as necessary any conditions precedent to ordination or any particular manner of ordination?**
5. **If so, what conditions precedent to ordination and what manner of ordination ought to be required?**

It is hoped that reports on this series will be despatched to the General Secretary on or before December 31, 1923.

A third series, on the Church, has been prepared and will be mailed as soon as this pamphlet has been mailed.

Source of the Reports.

The reports thus far submitted by local group conferences to the Subjects Committee have come from the following countries:

Australia	India
Austria	Norway
British Honduras	Nyasaland
British West Indies	Poland
Constantinople	Scotland
Czecho-Slovakia	Sweden
England	Switzerland
Germany	United States of America
Greece	Wales
Holland	

Those who took part in the conferences, so far as the information is available, belong to the following Communions:

Anglican	Methodist
Baptist	Old Catholic
Churches of Christ	Presbyterian
Congregational	Reformed
Disciples of Christ	Roman Catholic
Eastern Orthodox	South India United
Friends	Syrian Reformed
Lutheran	Y. M. C. A.
Jacobite Syrian	Unitarian

Report of the Subjects Committee

September 1923

The Subjects Committee desires to thank all those who answered the first series of questions which deals with the faith of the united Church. The replies which the Committee has received have been full of interest and have furnished to it characteristic views from many parts of the world, and very different Churches and schools of thought. The Committee is greatly encouraged by these answers to go forward with its work. Even at this first attempt, the material furnishes just what is most needful, a clear witness to the real unity underlying diversities of thought and expression, and this unity has become the more apparent, the more persons of diverse views have consulted together about it.

The Subjects Committee, reviewing the answers to the first series of questions, is confirmed in the opinion that the most helpful method of preparation for the World Conference is by local groups considering series of questions.

The Subjects Committee is very anxious that more groups should be formed containing members of various Churches who live within a short distance of each other and are therefore able to meet together from time to time without great inconvenience. The Committee urges upon such groups the importance of holding a number of meetings on each series of questions, and of arranging the meetings in such a way that the members may have opportunity for study and thought between the meetings. The replies of the Oxford Groups (see pages 16-27) are published herewith as an example of the sort of result which can be obtained by this method. It is not, however, necessary to the attainment of a good result that in all cases separate replies should be drawn up by the members of the several Churches which are represented in the group.

The Subjects Committee also sends the preliminary report which it has drawn up upon the first series of questions and the answers it has received to those questions. Together with these answers it has considered other treatments of the same subject which have appeared in the last few years. It is hoped that the report may be of interest to all those who take part in the consideration of the questions and to all friends of this movement. It is especially hoped that the state-

ment with which the report ends may guide the groups which consider the other series of questions, and may suggest the scope and form of the answers which are most valuable to the Subjects Committee.

The Subjects Committee earnestly asks all who are interested in this movement throughout the world to unite in earnest prayer for the preparations which are now being made for the World Conference on Faith and Order, that the number of those who carefully consider the series of questions put out may be greatly increased, and that no centre which is suitable for the formation of a group may be without its group. If the Subjects Committee is to be successful in preparing statements that will really help the deliberations of the World Conference, it is necessary that it should have in its hands the opinions of typical groups of men and women throughout the world. Again, if the World Conference is to be successful in representing the whole of Christendom and in attaining to expressions of opinion which will evoke a response of intelligent assent from the whole world, it is necessary that a very large amount of interest should be taken throughout the world in the questions as they are presented from time to time. It is therefore hoped that besides the groups at principal centres in every country which will undertake the work of preparing considered answers to each series of questions, there will be a large number of smaller groups in smaller centres which, though not so representative, will be able to make their contribution to the movement by reporting to the groups in the large centres. This should be organized locally in each country, and, if it can be so organized, will add very greatly to the knowledge of the movement as well as to the representative character of the World Conference.

EDWIN JAMES BOMBAY, Convener
Bishop of Bombay (Church of England in India).

A. MARTIN,
Principal of New College, Edinburgh (United Free Church of Scotland).

W. B. SELBIE,
Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford (Congregational Church).

A. LANG,
Professor of Theology and Dompredigier, Halle (Reformierte Bund).

HAMILCAR S. ALIVISATOS,
Professor of Canon Law, Athens (Eastern Orthodox Church).

H. N. BATE, Hon. Secretary,
Canon of Carlisle Cathedral (Church of England).

Resolutions of the Subjects Committee on the Agenda and Method of the World Conference.

1. It was agreed that the following five subjects should be the main subjects of the Conference:

Faith
The Church
The Ministry
The Sacraments
The Christian Moral Ideal.

2. It was agreed that the order in which these subjects should be discussed should be determined later.

3. **Method.** It was agreed that a series of questions upon each of these subjects should be circulated; that the Subjects Committee should attempt upon the basis of the answers received (and any other relevant material) to draw up a statement to which the World Conference might possibly agree. The Subjects Committee should also, if they think fit, prepare documents illustrative of the subjects to be discussed by the Conference which might be circulated to the members of the Conference beforehand.

4. **Method of discussion in the World Conference.** The statement should be the basis of discussion on each subject. The subject should first be discussed in general. When the general discussion is closed, a Motion should be made that the statement should be considered paragraph by paragraph. If this Motion should be lost, then either another statement should be submitted or the subject dropped. If the Motion should be carried, then the statement should be discussed paragraph by paragraph, and amendments might be made.

Statements of the existing opinions of the different Churches should not be asked for as part of the programme of the Conference, but the Delegates would, of course, speak from the point of view of the Churches which they represented.

5. No statement agreed to by the World Conference will have any authority except such as may be due to its intrinsic value. It will remain for each Church to determine whether it will approve and officially adopt any such statement.

September, 1923.

Preliminary Report of Subjects Committee, adopted at its meeting September 10-13, 1923, on the First Series of Questions, dealing with the Faith of the United Church.

In the answers which we have received, and in other similar material bearing on the same subject, the following points stand out with clearness:

1. There is general agreement that there must be some acknowledged unity of faith in the united Church, and further that the two subjects on which such unity of faith is most necessary are the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Holy Trinity.

2. There is general agreement that this unity of faith must receive expression, whether in the form of a creed or of a declaration of faith, in order that the uniting Churches and persons may be able to worship and work together in mutual confidence.

3. Representative opinion from the Churches which have always used creeds naturally puts forward those creeds which have been longest and most generally used, the Apostles' and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, commonly and hereafter called the Nicene Creed. It is to be noted that both these creeds contain a good deal of matter besides the two great subjects mentioned in paragraph 1.

4. Some of our correspondents have demanded a new creed, but none has been suggested which appears to have any likelihood of general acceptance for any of the well-known purposes which creeds have been found to serve.

5. There is also a minority which takes the position that no creed is desirable or necessary.

On these premises your Committee adds the following observations:

6. It is of course possible that a creed of union may be drawn up which will indicate the common faith in which the now divided Churches will reunite. It is clear, however, that no such creed would be accepted if it were supposed to be designed to contradict or displace the ancient creeds.

7. We submit a statement which aims at two objects — (a) the elucidation of some parts of the subjects in view of the difficulties

which emerge from the answers, and (b) the indication of the lines of agreement which the answers and other relevant matter that we have had before us appear to offer. This statement is also forwarded to the Continuation Committee for use in preparing documents for the Conference. We attach also an extract from a Statement (see page 14), issued in 1916 by a sub-committee of the English Commissions on the Faith and Order movement, which demonstrates a large and important agreement on doctrinal matters and is cast in a different form.

8. As a very large amount of confusion of thought has arisen from not distinguishing the different purposes for which creeds are used, considerable care has been taken to distinguish these in the Statement. It does not follow that at the World Conference itself it will be deemed necessary to take up a position with regard to all the uses of creeds mentioned in the present form of the Statement.

Statement based on the Replies to the First Series of World Conference Questions, to be submitted both to the Groups for information and consideration, and to the Continuation Committee, as a possible document for use at the Conference.

It being acknowledged that the Church was founded by the Will of God expressed through His Son Jesus Christ, and is maintained by the same Will, it has to be determined what on the human side is necessary to the unity and the life of the Church.

1. It is agreed that it is necessary for every member of the Church to have a hearty belief or trust in God as He has revealed Himself to men in His Son Jesus Christ, and that this revelation must be brought home to their hearts by His Holy Spirit.

2. In the historical creeds the typical phrase " I believe in " means more than intellectual assent to a proposition or propositions; it means trust in and self-devotion to a Person Whose Nature is declared by the names, attributes and propositions which follow. For instance, " I believe in God the Father," does not only nor even primarily mean, " I believe that God is the Father," but " I utterly trust in, and completely devote myself to God, being, as He is, the Father." Thus those who use the historical creeds with understanding recognise in them, not compendious statements of intellectual positions, but means whereby individuals and bodies of men may make profession of that faith which is the heart's trust in a Person.

3. At the same time that " heart's trust " has intellectual implications. The need for setting out these implications varies with varying occasions and also with the capacities of those who make the professions.

4. Such statements of the heart's trust in God, with less or greater development of its intellectual implications, commonly take the form to which the name *creed* has been given. Creeds have been put to various uses, of which it is not necessary here to treat more than four, viz., (1) the profession of faith at baptism (baptismal or beginners' creeds), and, as connected with this, instruction before baptism or before admission to the full privileges of membership in the Church; (2) the protection of the Church against false doctrine (the creeds of

the Councils or Teachers' Creeds); (3) confession of faith to God, especially in public worship; (4) confession of faith as witness before men (for this purpose longer statements such as the " Confessions " of the Reformation Age have also been used).

5. From the earliest times some verbal expression of this faith or " heart's trust " has been deemed to be necessary before admission to the Church. Hence arose the baptismal creeds. Attention may well be given to the experience gained from the instruction of adult converts from other religions as well as from the instruction of simple people who have been baptised in infancy. Both these forms of instruction witness to the advantage of the teaching about our Lord Jesus Christ by means of the facts of His life. This practical advantage coincides with doctrinal truth.

6. The present facts are that where a creed is used for the purposes mentioned in the preceding section, the Apostles' Creed is generally used, except by the Orthodox Church which uses the Nicene Creed, and that, where a creed is not used, instruction in the faith before, and profession of faith at the time of, baptism or admission to the full privileges of membership in the Church follow the general lines of the Apostles' Creed, though both that instruction and that profession may, and the instruction often does, go into greater detail.

7. It is suggested that agreement might be reached that the profession of faith at Baptism should be made either by means of the Apostles' Creed or of the Nicene Creed or by acceptance of the substance of one of those creeds, according as any Church may determine.

8. Besides having a statement whereby beginners in Christ may profess their heart's trust in God, it is reasonable that the Church should also have more advanced and detailed statements for the guidance of its teachers and the avoidance of error. It will be agreed that the Holy Spirit gave the Church the best answer for each time to the actual questions of that time. These statements varied from relatively short creeds, which differed very little in length or contents from the baptismal creeds, to very long statements, sometimes called Confessions. While such statements of the belief of the Church as a teaching Church are necessary for the instruction and guidance of its teachers and for explanation of their commission to teach, the place of any one of them in relation to the whole Church depends on the relative importance of the problems with which it deals.

9. The Nicene Creed was in origin such a statement and in many parts of the Church holds at the present time a preëminent place, while most Churches define more fully than is done in that Creed the

standard of doctrine which their teachers are commissioned to teach. It will be for the United Church to consider how it will conserve in the teaching given on its behalf the unity of doctrine which exists in it. But in the meantime it is likely to be agreed that that teaching must include, as its centre, the substance of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

10. At the same time it will be regarded as reasonable that different parts of the United Church should from time to time adopt or draw up more detailed statements of doctrine for the guidance of their teachers, always provided that they be in accordance with the revelation of God contained in the Holy Scriptures; and whether they be so, or not, it will be for the United Church to decide.

11. It has been a custom in many parts of the Church to recite some form of creed in public worship. This for the individual worshipper is an act of renewal of his heart's trust in God and of thankfulness to God for the revelation of Himself which He has given. It is for the congregation a corporate act of reaffirmation of the dependence on God which makes their common worship acceptable to Him and binds them one to another. Some churches have chosen for this purpose the baptismal creed as that most generally intelligible; others one of the fuller creeds, which, when used in public worship, may be regarded as an expression of the mind of the whole Church or of the ideal to which the mind of the individual may attain.

Note: It should be remembered that while there is some early evidence of the use of the Creeds as 'hymns,' they were not primarily intended for recitation in public worship. However, similar dogmatic material is in free general use, for purposes of exultant or thankful corporate professions, in some of the great hymns of the Church: e.g. *Te Deum Laudamus*, *Adeste Fideles*, and Luther's hymn *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott.*

12. This recitation of the creed in public worship is a godly practice, but is not essential to the unity and the life of the Church. It is suggested that any part of the Church should be free to use either the Nicene or the Apostles' Creed, or both, in public worship or, if to its proper authorities it seem better, not to recite a creed in public worship.

13. In regard to the use of creeds for the purpose of bearing witness before men, we may advert to the custom in the earliest times of presenting the creed of a local Church to other Churches with a view to showing that the first named Church held the truth and agreed with the rest of Christendom. We may also mention the object which was sought to be attained by various later Confessional statements

framed "in order that the consent of the Churches might appear." The united Church will desire to bear witness to the decisive and fundamental truths which it professes and teaches, and the World Conference, as preparing for the united Church, will be concerned to give such witness, and in this connection will need to make some declaration of the common faith of Christendom whether by means of an ancient formula, or by means of a declaration couched in more modern terms.

14. It is suggested, further, that it is not beyond the competence of the universal Church, when once more united, to frame another creed either for one of the above-mentioned established purposes of a creed, or for some other purpose not hitherto contemplated, always provided that such new creed be in accordance with the revelations of God recorded in Holy Scripture, and that neither the framing of the new creed nor that creed when framed bring into question the validity of the two creeds above mentioned, viz., the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed, for the purposes for which and the times in which they were framed, and for use by all persons or Churches who desire to retain their use for the said purposes.

15. It is suggested, again, that it may be competent for any part of the universal Church when united to adopt with the consent of the whole Church a new form of creed for any of the purposes above mentioned or for some purpose not hitherto contemplated.

Towards Christian Unity

The following is an extract from the first *ad interim* Report of the Sub-Committee appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York's Committee and by representatives of the English Free Churches' Commissions, in connection with the proposed World Conference on Faith and Order. The Report is dated February, 1916, and bears the following signatures:

G. W. Bath: & Well: (*Chairman*).
E. Winton:
C. Oxon:
W. T. Davison.
A. E. Garvie.
J. Scott Lidgett.
J. H. Shakespeare.
C. Anderson Scott.
Eugene Stock.
Tissington Tatlow (*Hon. Sec.*).

PART I.

A Statement of Agreement on Matters of Faith.

We, who belong to different Christian Communions and are engaged in the discussion of questions of Faith and Order, desire to affirm our agreement upon certain foundation truths as the basis of a spiritual and rational creed and life for all mankind. We express them as follows:

(1) As Christians we believe that, while there is some knowledge of God to be found among all races of men and some measure of divine grace and help is present to all, a unique, progressive and redemptive revelation of Himself was given by God to the Hebrew people through the agency of inspired prophets, " in many parts and in many manners," and that this revelation reaches its culmination and completeness in One Who is more than a prophet, Who is the Incarnate Son of God, our Saviour and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

(2) This distinctive revelation, accepted as the word of God, is the basis of the life of the Christian Church and is intended to be the formative influence upon the mind and character of the individual believer.

(3) This word of God is contained in the Old and New Testaments and constitutes the permanent spiritual value of the Bible.

(4) The root and centre of this revelation, as intellectually interpreted, consists in a positive and highly distinctive doctrine of God — His nature, character and will. From this doctrine of God follows a certain sequence of doctrines concerning creation, human nature and destiny, sin, individual and racial, redemption through the incarnation of the Son of God and His atoning death

and resurrection, the mission and operation of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, the Church, the last things, and Christian life and duty, individual and social: all these cohere with and follow from this doctrine of God.

(5) Since Christianity offers an historical revelation of God, the coherence and sequence of Christian doctrine involve a necessary synthesis of idea and fact such as is presented to us in the New Testament and in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds: and these Creeds both in their statements of historical fact and in their statements of doctrine affirm essential elements of the Christian faith as contained in Scripture, which the Church could never abandon without abandoning its basis in the word of God. . . .

The Report in full is to be found in the booklet entitled *Documents bearing on the Problem of Christian Unity and Fellowship* (S.P.C.K., London, 1920, 2s., also Macmillan, New York), and in the *Compilation of Proposals for Christian Unity* issued by the World Conference Continuation Committee in 1921.

Answers returned by Groups in the University of Oxford, England, to the First Series of Questions, concerning the Faith of the Reunited Church.

ANGLICAN GROUP.

1. *What degree of unity in Faith will be necessary in a reunited Church?*

That degree which is implied by the word Christian: namely, the acceptance of the revelation of God through Jesus Christ, and the building up of the Christian life in the power of His Spirit.

2. *Is a statement of this one Faith in the form of a Creed necessary or desirable?*

In practice an endorsement of the historic theology of the Church will prove both necessary and desirable.

3. *If so, what Creed should be used? or what other formulary would be desirable?*

No new formularies are desirable, but the ancient Creeds of the Church (and in particular the Creed commonly called Nicene) are valuable as standards of corporate doctrine.

4. *What are the proper uses of a Creed and of a Confession of Faith?*

The uses of a Creed may be

(*a*) Baptismal.
(*b*) Liturgical.
(*c*) Confessional.

(*a*) The necessary faith is contained in the baptismal formula (Mt. xxviii, 19) and Baptism should imply an acceptance of this. There has never been one universal baptismal creed in the Church. It is lawful for the several churches to use each its own Creed, provided it is agreeable with Christian tradition.

(*b*) Where the Creed is used in the Services of the Church, it should be understood that it is an expression of corporate faith and allegiance to Christ. This might be emphasized by the adoption of the plural form (πιστεύομεν).

(*c*) The confessional use of the Creed is to express the intention of the Society to carry on the tradition of those who framed it. It does not imply either that it is a complete expression of the Christian Faith, or that every phrase must be literally accepted by every individual member. We accept the Faith of Christ as it is taught us by the Holy Scriptures, and as it has been handed down to us in the Creeds, and as it is continuously expounded in Christian theology.

CONGREGATIONALIST GROUP.

The historical position of Congregationalists with regard to Creeds or Confessions of Faith may be set forth as follows:

In the year 1596 "a true Confession of Faith" was issued by the people "falsely called Brownists" for the clearing of ourselves from those unchristian slanders of heresy, schism, pride, obstinacy, disloyalty, sedition, etc., which by our adversaries are in all places given out against us. In 1658 the Savoy Conference issued "a Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England." The following quotation will sufficiently indicate their attitude:

> "Confessions when made by a company of professors of Christianity jointly meeting to that end — the most genuine and natural use of such is, that under the same form of words they express the substance of the same common salvation, or unity of their Faith, whereby speaking the same things they show themselves 'perfectly joined in the same mind and in the same judgment.' And accordingly such a transaction is to be looked upon as a meet or fit medium or means whereby to express their common 'Faith and Salvation;' and no way to be made use of as an imposition upon any. Whatever is of force or constraint in matters of this nature causeth them to degenerate from the name and nature of Confessions; and turns them, from being Confessions of Faith, into exactions and impositions of Faith."

In 1883 another Declaration of Faith and Order and Discipline was issued, and this is still published in the Congregational Year Book as giving general information of what is commonly believed among Congregationalists, though it is not intended that it should be maintained as a standard to which assent is to be required. It is clear, therefore, that Congregationalists have always regarded it as right to make a Declaration of Faith, not as a Creed to be enforced, but as a statement of their united belief and as a witness to the outside world. They require on the part of those who enter the Church evidence of their personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; and they always claim the right to satisfy themselves that those who exercise a ministry in the Church have a deep and earnest faith in the central truths of Christianity.

In the light of the foregoing, therefore, we as Congregationalists would treat the questions of the Continuation Committee as follows:

1.* We believe that a large measure of unity in vital or religious faith is necessary, but that the formulated expression of such faith (as in the Œcumenical Creeds) should always allow for diversity of opinion

* Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 refer to questions submitted, see p. 16.

on its more theoretic aspects. The exact degree of such credal unity and the forms by which it is set forth must be determined by the reunited Church itself.

2. We do not regard it as necessary or even desirable to have any formal Creed, in the sense of a test imposed by authority as *per se* binding; while yet we believe that unity of Faith, such as the World Conference presupposes, can and should for certain purposes be made manifest by Confessions of Faith the form of which is recognized as having only a relative value. In so saying we are anxious to lay stress on the personal relationship of believers, both severally and corporately, to God in Christ, rather than on the acceptance of exact theological definitions, which would tend to the exclusion of some who plainly have the Spirit of Christ and should therefore be recognized as members of His Visible Body.

3. We do not think any new credal form would prove a practicable basis for such reunion as is here in question: nor can we expect certain of the historic communions between which reunion seems possible to forego acceptance in some form of the Catholic Creeds, particularly the Nicene. This being so, we believe that proper mutual deference to others' consciences points to the method of allowing alternative ways of expressing general acceptance of those existing historic Creeds. Congregationalists accept the Faith which these Creeds enshrine; but they are not willing to be put into the position — nor do they wish to put others into the position — of acceptance with mental reservations. They honour the Confessions of Faith put forth from time to time by Congregationalists (as by the Anglican Church in its " Articles of Religion ") as historic expressions of their belief called forth by circumstances; and they honour the Œcumenical Creeds in much the same way. But neither in the one case nor the other would they impose their formal acceptance upon tender consciences, even for the teaching ministry, much less for the Church's ordinary membership. Only in the above sense, then, could they accept the retention of the two historic Creeds; and they would prefer to see the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol restored to its original form.

4. Here we take Creed and Confession of Faith to be employed as synonymous (as the use of " or " in the Greek and German versions of the questions seems to imply), yet as suggesting a difference of practical use. In any case we regard the proper uses of a Confession of Faith to be: (1) to express, for ourselves or others, our solidarity with the essential religious experience and belief of the Church in all ages; (2) to make manifest to all certain cardinal points of the Christian Faith, whether for corporate witness or for purposes of instruction.

METHODIST AND PRESBYTERIAN GROUP.

In accordance with the request of the Oxford Committee on "Faith and Order," a small group representing Methodists and Presbyterians in Oxford met on March 28th and on April 20th, 1921.

There were present Mr. E. E. Genner, Rev. D. C. Lusk, Mr. W. D. Ross, Rev. W. E. Soothill and Mr. M. N. Tod; Dr. J. K. Fotheringham and the Rev. Grainger Hargreaves (Chairman of the Oxford District of the Wesleyan Methodist Church) were invited to join the group, but were unavoidably prevented from attending, the former by illness, the latter by pressure of business. Both, however, sent suggestions and gave their general approval to the answers agreed upon by the group.

The following Answers and Notes were agreed upon:

1. As Christian Faith is a concern of the heart and of the will as well as of the understanding, the Faith which must be held in common throughout a reunited Church is primarily a religious belief in and devotion to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In doctrine the necessary fundamental agreement is the acceptance of the Word, or revelation of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and made explicit in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles, as the supreme standard of faith and life in all things necessary for salvation.

(Explanation of argument: The first sentence represents a conviction that Faith is more than Doctrine, and that the reunited Church ought to make this clear; the phrase "religious belief in and devotion to" is to safeguard the original sense of *πιστεύω εἰς*. The distinction between supreme and subordinate standards in doctrine follows an important usage. The supreme standard here excludes such innovations as may be brought in, for example, from tradition. The last phrase limits the application of the standard to essential matters.)

2. A statement of what is understood by the whole Church to be the chief content of the Word or Gospel of God is desirable, as a subordinate standard, for teaching and the maintenance of unity; yet not as though it were in itself of supreme authority directly binding upon each member.

In the case of both Methodists and Presbyterians it is represented that the secondary or subordinate standards already accepted have usually been framed in the longer and more freely worded form of Confessions, in preference to the shorter form of Creeds which lends itself less readily to revision or to the full expression of evangelical doctrine.

Note 1. In the case of some Methodists it is represented that the Faith of the people finds more spontaneous and effective public expression in their hymns than in formal statements of Creed, and that this is in accordance with the spirit which in early days produced the "Te Deum."

3. If a short Creed is to be used, the Apostles Creed is for our communities considered the most desirable* of existing Creeds for the purposes specified in the answer to Question 2, as a brief traditional summary of Christian doctrine. It may not, however, be entirely suitable for the purpose of public recitation; see Note 3, below (on " mental reservations ").

4. In consideration of the divergences among existing presentations of the Word or Gospel of God in the various communities of Christians, it is suggested that, while a Creed should be agreed upon as a brief statement of the Faith held in common, these communities must meanwhile make use of their several Articles or Confessions of Faith as expressing more fully the senses in which they understand the Word of God. At the same time it ought to be believed that the Gospel is one, and that therefore every presentation of it, in so far as it has been developed by the aid of the Holy Spirit, is essentially in harmony with every other such presentation and is intended by God ultimately to be held in that harmony by the whole Church.

Note 2. In respect of the difference between the private individual member and the Church in Her teaching function, the Church in Her teaching will make more explicit the contents of the Gospel, which the private member may sufficiently profess in a more summary or implicit form.

Note 3. Public recitation of any Creed likely to involve worshippers in " mental reservation " (i.e. the understanding of clauses in senses at variance with the senses in which the Church intends them to be used) is deprecated.

Note 4. On the whole question of Faith it is noted that the disunion of Western reformed Christendom is by no means wholly due to present differences in doctrine.

(Explanation of argument in answer to Question 4: This answer is based on the idea that each branch of the Church has presumably been taught by God, with special clearness, some particular aspect of the truth; and that consequently, although the special witnesses of these communities may seem contrary to one another, and, as expressed in their subordinate standards, may actually conflict, yet it ought to be a conviction throughout this whole movement, that they must be capable of reconciliation with one another, in so far as they have been learned from God.)

W. D. ROSS, *Chairman of the Group.*
D. C. LUSK, *Secretary.*

APRIL 30, 1921.

* But solely on the ground that it is more familiar to Methodists and Presbyterians from usage.

JOINT REPLY.

The following four answers represent a suggestion by the three Oxford Denominational Groups as to the way in which unity might be attained.

1. That degree which is implied by the word Christian, namely the acceptance of the revelation of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as summed up in Jesus Christ, and the building up of the Christian faith and life in the power of His Spirit.

2. In a reunited Church some formal statement of this common Faith will be found necessary.

3. No new formulary is recommended. The ancient Creeds of the Church (and in particular the Creed commonly called Nicene) are the best available expressions of the common faith.

4. Among the various uses of a Creed or a Confession of Faith are the following:

(*a*) Baptismal.
(*b*) Liturgical.
(*c*) Confessional.

(*a*) The necessary faith is contained in the baptismal formula (Mt. xxviii, 19), and Baptism should imply an acceptance of this. Beyond this there has never been one universal baptismal creed in the Church, and it seems allowable that different branches or Groups of the reunited Church should use in addition any Creed that is agreeable with the common Faith.

(*b*) Where a Creed is used liturgically in the Services of the Church, it should be understood as an expression of corporate Faith and Allegiance.

(*c*) Where a Creed is used as a confession or standard of belief it expresses the intention of carrying on the tradition of those who framed it; such use of a Creed does not imply either that it is a complete expression of the Christian Faith, or that every phrase must be literally accepted by every individual member of the Church who assents to it. It implies rather the acceptance of the Faith of Christ as it is taught us by the Holy Scriptures, as it has been handed down to us in the historic Creeds, and as it is continuously expounded in Christian theology.

Answers returned by Groups in the University of Oxford, England, to the Second Series of Questions, concerning the Ministry in the Reunited Church.

ANGLICAN GROUP.

1. *What degree of unity in the matter of order will be necessary in a reunited Church?*

No answer can properly be given to this question until the Church is reunited. In so far as any answer is possible at present, its character may be gathered from the answers to the four questions following.

2. *Is it necessary that there should be a common Ministry universally recognised?*

Assuming that the questions have in view the ideal of a united Church, and not that of a federation of different denominations permanently distinct, then it appears that reunion could only come about, as a practical proposition, on the basis of a common Ministry universally recognised. This does not preclude the theoretical possibility that the Church, when once unity had been achieved, might be guided by the Spirit to vary the form of its Ministry.

3. *If so, of what orders or kinds of Ministers will this Ministry consist?*

With whatever kinds or orders of subordinate ministry, at least an order of chief Ministers, recognised universally by Christendom as being competent both to administer the sacraments and also, in virtue of their office as chief Pastors, to act for the Church in admitting others to the Ministry.

4. *Will the reunited Church require as necessary any conditions precedent to ordination or any particular manner of ordination?*

Yes.

5. *If so, what conditions precedent to ordination and what manner of ordination ought to be required?*

Besides an inward call, such test of character, faith, and intellectual attainments as shall satisfy the ordaining Minister, some form of approval of the candidate on the part of the body of the faithful, and evidence of the full status of the candidate as a member of the Christian Church should be required as conditions precedent to ordination.
The manner of ordination should be by prayer asking God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by laying on of hands.

CONGREGATIONALIST GROUP.

(Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 refer to questions submitted, see p. 22.)

1. We believe that Congregationalists in general would agree that for the attainment of any practicable measure of unity, such as should secure the fellowship of Christians of various denominations within a reunited Church, it would be necessary to provide for the common observance of the two primitive Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. The form of observance should include the use of the respective Scriptural formulæ. Beyond this it would be necessary (in the words of the Lambeth Appeal of 1920) " to retain much that has long been distinctive in the methods of worship and service " of the reuniting branches.

2 and 3. A common Ministry, universally recognised, would seem to be necessary. We recognise two main functions of the Ministry, the Pastoral and the Diaconal. The former function includes teaching, preaching, the administration of the Sacraments, the cure of souls, and spiritual leadership within the Christian congregation. The latter is concerned with organisation and the administration of the outward or temporal affairs of the congregation. These two functions correspond roughly with the historic orders of the Presbyterate and the Diaconate. We also recognise a ministerial function of expressing or embodying the principle of unity both within the congregation and among congregations in the Catholic Church at large. Under present conditions this function may best be discharged in relation to the Church Catholic by an episcopate, constitutional, elective, and representative.

4 and 5. The precedent condition of ordination is a definite and personal divine calling, ratified by the call of the Christian congregation on the basis of spiritual, moral and intellectual fitness, and adequate training.

The form of ordination should be such as to give adequate symbolic expression (a) to the character of the ministry as representative both of the local Christian congregation and of the Church Catholic; and (b) to the consecration of the minister by himself, the Church, and God to the specific ministry for which he is commissioned.

METHODIST GROUP.

1. In a reunited Church, the Order, within the geographical area, usually the nation, must in essentials be one, with the possibility of variations in non-essentials.. The minimum in order that is necessary for any scheme of union is that of a national consultative advisory board, composed of leaders of the various groups, the legislative powers being in the control of the respective groups.

2. In any union it would be essential that the respective groups should recognise each other's ministry without further ordination. Any group, desiring to use the services of a minister of another group, may arrange some method of authorisation which suggests no doubt as to the validity of the orders of his group.

3. The orders of ministry, cleric and lay, should be determined by each group. In the Methodist Church there are probationers, ordained ministers and superintendents. There is, however, only one ordination, namely, that to the ministry.

4. The conditions precedent to ordination and the particular mode should be left to the decision of each group, subject to the suggestions made below.

5. The conditions precedent to ordination should be based on satisfactory evidence of Christian character and ability to care for the spiritual needs of the people. As to the mode, the laying on of hands by one or more persons duly authorised by the group is advisable and is in accordance with Methodist practice.

PRESBYTERIAN GROUP.

1. Such unity in order as will preserve and manifest the spiritual unity, which the whole Church or Body of Christ possesses by its relation to its divine Head: that is, such as will secure the coördinating of the work of all parts, and common participation in Holy Communion.

Note. Conciliar methods of coördination are the most desirable; and are also practicable in many circumstances where uniformity is unattainable.

2. It is desirable that there should be a ministry universally recognised.

Note. In earlier stages alternative forms of this ministry may be preferred by different groups of Christians; but it is desirable that the various groups should each be able to recognise the complete validity of these ministries in the other groups.

3. This ministry will be the Pastoral Office or Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, instituted by our Lord in His Church and held by those who are set apart thereto by lawful authority.

Note 1. (On Presbyterial Government).

In Churches holding the Reformed system (commonly called in this country "Presbyterian") this office is exercised by Ministers, who are associated together in courts or presbyteries with Ruling Elders who are ordained to join with the Ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the government of the Church. These courts are congregational ("the Session"), classical ("the Presbytery"), synodical, and national or general. Government by such assemblies is believed to be in agreement with the institution of the Apostles of our Lord.

Note 2. (On Prelacy).

As in early times churches in one place came to have one presbyter exercising a superintendence over the others, so it may be prudent and for the well-being of the Church, in some circumstances, that certain ministers should be preferred to a superintendence in which they might exercise individually some of the powers belonging to the presbyterate collectively. Such superintendents (who might be called "bishops," though that name belongs by apostolic institution to the presbyters) ought as far as possible to observe the ancient principle of working in close harmony with the councils of their presbyters (a principle which is cherished in Reformed churches as between the minister of each congregation and his ruling elders). Otherwise prelacy may be, as it has sometimes been in the past, both oppressive in itself and also a cause of grave corruptions.

4. Yes, both.

5. The necessary conditions precedent to ordination to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments will be (a) zeal for the service of God, (b) evidence of faith and character, (c) adequate learning — all of these as approved by the competent authority, (which in Reformed churches is the Presbytery) to which should be added as desirable in settled churches, (d) a call by a congregation.

The manner of ordination to this ministry will necessarily involve (e) that ordination is an act of that court or assembly of the church which has authority in the particular case, (which in Reformed churches is normally the Presbytery and never a lower court), and (f) that the act is to be performed by prayer with (as an apostolic custom which it is desirable to continue) the laying on of hands by those members of that assembly who are already in this ministry.

A joint reply agreed upon by the members of the

CONGREGATIONALIST, METHODIST AND PRESBYTERIAN GROUPS.

1. Such unity in order as will preserve and manifest the Church's spiritual unity, in practical fellowship, and particularly in provision for the due observance of the Sacrament of Baptism and for common participation in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
In order to secure this fellowship in work and sacraments within such national areas as England, it would be desirable to form National Advisory Councils representative of the various groups but without legislative power.

2. A Ministry universally recognised, whether by common or by mutual authorisation, would seem to be necessary. Any mode of inter-group authorisation of ministers must fully recognise the validity of existing ministries as ministries of Jesus Christ.

3. The necessary ministry will be the ordinary Pastoral Office or Ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Christian congregation. Other kinds of ministry, ordained and unordained, should be determined by each group. With a view to greater solidarity in the whole Church an episcopate, elective, representative and constitutionally limited in jurisdiction, would probably be acceptable to all the groups we represent, so long as they understood that they were not committed to the view that this episcopate was an exclusive channel of sacramental grace.

4. Yes, both.

5. The condition precedent to ordination should be personal consciousness of a divine call, ratified by the call of the Church. There should also be satisfactory evidence of Christian character and of ability to care for the spiritual needs of the people.
The form of ordination should give adequate expression (a) to the character of the ministry in its local and in its universal scope, and (b) to the consecration of the minister by himself, the Church and God. Prayer with the laying on of hands by one or more persons duly authorized by the group is in accordance with apostolic custom and with the general practice of the Church, and should, in our opinion, be maintained in the reunited Church.

Joint reply (amended form)

FROM ALL THE GROUPS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

1. Such unity in order as will preserve and manifest the Church's spiritual unity, by fellowship in work and worship, including provision for the due observance of the Sacrament of Baptism and for common participation in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

2. Assuming that the Questions have in view the ideal of an united Church, and not that of a federation of different denominations permanently distinct, then it appears that a ministry universally recognised by common authorisation would be necessary.

3. This ministry will consist of at least (a) an elective and constitutional episcopate; (b) a local ministry of the Word and Sacraments. This is not meant to exclude the possibility of other ministries, whether ordained or unordained. Nor does it preclude the theoretical possibility that the Church, when once unity had been achieved, might be guided by the Spirit to vary the form of its ministry.

4. Yes.

5. Besides the personal consciousness of a divine call, there should be required as conditions precedent to ordination, such test of character, faith and intellectual attainments as shall satisfy the ordaining authority, some form of approval of the candidate on the part of the body of the faithful, and evidence of the full status of the candidate as a member of the Christian Church.
The manner of ordination should be by prayer asking God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by the laying on of hands.

The members of the groups in Oxford University were as follows:

Anglicans: Rev. H. B. Kennedy, B.D., Rev. A. C. Headlam, D.D. (now Bishop of Gloucester), Rev. Walter Lock, M.A., D.D., Professor Percy Gardner, Litt. D., Professor C. C. J. Webb, Rev. Darwell Stone, M.A., D.D., Rev. H. B. Gooding, M.A., Rev. G. A. Mitchell, M.A., Rev. C. W. Emmet, M.A., Rev. F. D. V. Narborough, B.A., Rev. A. E. J. Rawlinson, M.A., Rev. B. H. Streeter, D.D., Rev. F. E. Hutchinson, M.A.

Congregationalists: Rev. Principal W. B. Selbie, M.A., D.D., Rev. James Vernon Bartlet, M.A., D.D.

Methodists: Rev. W. E. Soothill, Rev. Grainger Hargreaves, Ernest E. Genner, M.A.

Presbyterians: Rev. D. C. Lusk, Rev. J. G. Fotheringham, D.D., W. D. Ross, Marcus N. Tod.

Publications.

The following pamphlets, and subsequent publications about the movement, may be had without charge from the General Secretary, Robert H. Gardiner, 174 Water Street, Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A.

No. 1. *Report and Resolution of the Protestant Episcopal Church suggesting the Conference, and Reports and Resolutions of the National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States looking to Reunion with the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1910.

No. 2. *Report and Resolution of the Protestant Episcopal Church suggesting the Conference.* 1910.

No. 14. *An Official Statement by the Joint Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. S. A.* 1912.

No. 15. *Prayer and Unity*, by a Layman. 1913.

No. 18. *Unity or Union: which?* by the Rt. Rev. P. M. Rhinelander, D.D. 1913.

No. 19. *The Conference Spirit*, by a Layman. 1913.

No. 20. *The Manifestation of Unity*, by the Rt. Rev. C. P. Anderson, D.D. 1913.

No. 21. *List of Commissions already appointed.* The current edition contains lists of the members of the Continuation Committee and the Subjects Committee, as well as the Commissions of the several participating Churches.

No. 24. *A First Preliminary Conference* (Hotel Astor, New York, 1913).

No. 25. *Report of the Committee on Church Unity of the National Council of Congregational Churches.* 1913.

No. 26. *A World Movement for Christian Unity*, by Rev. Lefferd M. A. Haughwout. 1914.

No. 27. *Second Meeting of the Advisory Committee. Report of the Second Deputation to Great Britain. The Call for a Truce of God.* 1914.

No. 28. *The Object and Method of Conference.* 1915.

No. 29. *A Manual of Prayer for Unity.* 1915. 38 pages. Single copies free. More, five cents each. Three of the prayers, conveniently printed on a card, may be had free.

Suggestions for the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity. Beginning in 1919, new Suggestions have been printed from year to year.

No. 31. *Report of the Joint Commission to the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1916.

Epistolae nomine Ssmi Domini Benedicti XV humaniter missae ab eminentissimo viro Petro Gasparri, C.S.R.E., coetui virorum delectorum ad Congressum orbis christiani parandum ut favente Deo controversiae de fide et constitutione Ecclesiae Christi rite dilucidentur atque explorentur. 1917.

De Unione Ecclesiarum. 1917. Contains appended a list of articles about the World Conference movement in French, Italian, German, Greek, Russian and other periodicals. Reprints of such articles are often available for free distribution by the Secretary.

No. 32. *Report of the Deputation to Europe and the East. Rapport de la Mission envoyée en Europe et dans l'Orient. Rapporto della Delegazione mandata in Europa e nell'Oriente.* 1919.

Une nouvelle tentative pour préparer la réunion des Églises. Ein neuer Versuch die Wiedervereinigung der Christenheit herbeizuführen. Νέα ἀπόπειρα πρὸς προπαρασκευὴν τῆς ἑνώσεως τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ. 1920.

No. 33. *Report of the Preliminary Meeting at Geneva, Switzerland, August 12–20, 1920. A Pilgrimage toward Unity.*

No. 34. *A Compilation of Proposals for Christian Unity.* 1921. Contains the Appeal to all Christian People from the Bishops assembled in the Lambeth Conference of 1920, and other material relating to local efforts for reunion.

No. 35. *Hopeful Conferences in England and Australia.* 1922. Contains appended a list of some of the more recent books on Reunion.

No. 36. *Twenty Paragraphs about the World Conference on Faith and Order,* by Ralph W. Brown. 1922. *Zwanzig Paragraphen ueber die Weltkonferenz ueber Glauben und Kirchenverfassung.* 1923.

Question-sheets and documents issued by the Subjects Committee for use in local discussion groups may be had free from the Secretary in English, French, German and Greek, or in English alone. The Secretary is prepared to furnish in many instances a list of persons who might form a nucleus for such a group.

Two statements as to the principles and value of conference.

By Rt. Rev. James DeW. Perry, Jr., D.D.

There is need for clear understanding and agreement about the principles which are to govern all our work in the promotion of the World Conference on Faith and Order. The right to make the articles of the Church's faith the subject of open conference between Churchmen and others has been challenged. That there is complete consistency between conviction and conference is a principle which must be staunchly avowed and defended. Conviction without compromise, and conference for the sympathetic understanding of positions that differ from our own: these offer the ground through which the way to reunion may be opened, freed from obstacles of prejudice and indifference.

By Rev. Francis J. Hall, D.D.

(*A*) *Mutual education as between the sundered portions of Christendom is an indispensable antecedent condition of hopeful efforts at reunion, inasmuch as grave differences of faith and order have arisen and cannot be removed unless we patiently confer with one another.*

(*B*) *Negotiations and schemes looking to immediate reunion — or even to steps towards reunion — wait for possibility of wholesome results consistent with the mind of Christ until this preliminary mutual education shall have done its work sufficiently for the wounds to be closed without having poisonous matter left in them.*

(*C*) *To make our refusal of immediate schemes, whether complete or partial, include refusal to confer, is to evade the plain call of the Holy Spirit that we should labour as well as pray for unity. We may find results slow in coming — visible results surely so — but our plain duty is to do what we can without compromising the deposit of Christ, and to leave the results to God.*